

Special Announcements

Government
Publications

of the
Ontario Human Rights Commission

400 University Avenue
Toronto, Canada
965-6841

CA20NL 72
S62

LIBRARY
JUN 25 1973
UNIVERSITY

June, 1973

RECORDED TELEPHONE HATE MESSAGES

The kind of periodic outbreak of extremist hate propaganda which the Commission exists to combat has occurred in the last few months. Commission Director Robert W. McPhee initiated considerable public and newspaper reaction by reporting, in a speech to the Hamilton Rotary Club in January, the existence of a recorded telephone message in London of a blatantly racist nature, advocating white supremacy. The message was given in the name of the Social Credit Party of Canada.

Since Bell Telephone is a federally chartered company, the Commission does not have jurisdiction over it; hence a direct formal complaint was not possible. The Commission alerted Members of Parliament from the district and contacted federal government departments, C.B.C. reporters and Bell Canada. The Social Credit Party denied that the message was on their behalf and subsequently identified the speaker as the founder of the Canadian National Socialist Party who, they said, attempts to pass himself off as a member of the Social Credit Party.

Bell Canada, approached by a spokesman for the Black community, expressed its extreme disapproval of the content of the message but asserted that they were forbidden by law to censor customers' communications. They offered, however, to cooperate with the courts in any action which might be taken.

A message similar to the London one became available in Toronto, this time in the name of the Western Guard, an extremist political group. At the beginning of April the Commission's Legal Adviser, Professor Ian Hunter, was interviewed on a Toronto radio station. He expressed the Commission's strong condemnation of the messages and stated that all efforts are being made to end them.

The Commission received representations from the Black community concerning the offensive nature of these messages and discussed possible avenues of action with them. A lawyer representing the Black community has written to the Attorney General requesting that he initiate action under the relevant section of the Criminal Code. He pointed out that the messages promote hatred against Blacks in particular and non-Christian, non-European people in general.

COMMISSION REPRESENTED AT CASHRA CONFERENCE

The Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies held its second annual conference in Halifax from May 29 to June 1. Three of the Human Rights Commissioners from Ontario attended, Dr. Daniel G. Hill, Chairman, Professor Walter Currie and Mr. Gordon Greenaway. The Director, Robert W. McPhee, and the Legal Adviser, Professor Ian Hunter, also attended. Mrs. Katherine Eastham, of the Women's Bureau section of the Commission, was present as an observer on behalf of the Task Force on Section 4(1) (g) of the Ontario Human Rights Code.



Ministry of
Labour

Ontario

HRC5013

METRO TORONTO POLICE

Relations between the Metro Toronto Police Department and immigrant communities constitute a major community work project for the Commission. Besides taking individual complaints, the Commission is in contact with the minority groups, both cultural and racial, and with the Police Complaint Bureau and the Police College.

Officers give seminars on police-minority group relations and on cultural differences as they affect behaviour patterns. Those attending are policemen who patrol beats and those taking in-service training courses. Assistant Director George A. Brown lectures regularly to the in-training course and to the Police Training College.

A greater awareness by the police of the need for such sensitizing training because of the ethnic and cultural diversity of Toronto's population is becoming apparent. Complainants now present themselves at the Commission office upon recommendation of a police officer.

WALLACEBURG'S INTERGROUP RELATIONS

The publicized problem of the relations between Wallaceburg's native people and its police force have brought the involvement of the Union of Ontario Indians and the Commission with the Wallaceburg Town Council and the Chief of the nearby Walpole Island Reserve. The Commission has offered its conciliation services to the parties. Pending acceptance of our good offices, Commission officers are cooperating with the Reserve's residents and the Union of Ontario Indians in investigating grievances to substantiate the factual history of the allegations.

An important step was taken when a meeting was held between Commissioners D. G. Hill, Valerie Kasurak and Gordon Greenaway with the Solicitor General, the Hon. John Yaremko, the Deputy Solicitor General, R. M. Warren, Mr. Elmer Bell, Chairman of the Ontario Police Commission and other Commissioners. They exchanged information and reviewed ways of working together on the problems. The Police Commission is actively considering a number of human rights proposals to improve police-community relations in Wallaceburg.

KENORA CITIZENS' COMMITTEE

The town of Kenora has become sufficiently concerned over the number of violent deaths, notably including suicides, among Indians, both in the town, the outlying areas and on the Reserves, to form a Concerned Citizens' Committee. The Commission's resident officer, Cuyler Cotton, has played a crucial part in the creation of the Committee and in bringing it together with Treaty Council Number 3, Indian Bands, the Social Planning Council and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Mr. Cotton continues to play a coordinating role.

Meetings of all interested parties have been held, with representatives of the Ontario Provincial Police present as well.

In Toronto, Commission Chairman D. G. Hill and Director R. W. McPhee are working with the Interministry Committee on Native Affairs, the Ontario Police Commission and the Deputy Solicitor General to bring the problem to the attention of ministries and to coordinate governmental resources.

NORTHERN JOB PROJECT FOR NATIVE PEOPLES

The Commission took a new approach to generating employment for native peoples in a program launched in cooperation with the Employment Standards Branch and the Industrial Training Branch. The project identified a number of Indians with mechanical skills and enlisted the cooperation of the Abitibi Pulp and Paper Co. to hire and train them. They will eventually be offered permanent employment as mechanics' helpers at the full union rate. To date six have been hired and the company will consider hiring more.

An attempt is now being made to apply the same pattern with Domtar Packaging Ltd. and the Great Lakes Paper Co. They have shown themselves initially receptive to the idea.

OTTAWA CENTRE FOR NEW ARRIVALS

The Commission's Ottawa office was involved in the work of the Ottawa Committee for Ugandan Asians. The success of this venture has led to the establishment of an office called New Canadian Services, which offers a broad range of assistance and referral to new arrivals in Ottawa. The new office is presently funded by an L.I.P. grant, while the Commission's Ottawa officer, Miss Anna Whitley, assists the staff to find permanent sources of funding.

INTERGROUP TENSIONS IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL

Intergroup tensions at the Amherstburg Public School led the principal to meet with the Commission officer in Windsor. Mrs. Jo-Ann Shreve then met separately with parents and with the principal on several occasions. A line of action was developed. She held seminars for the teachers to discuss the problem, the teachers' attitudes and possible solutions. Other approaches are being prepared and the Commission remains on call for any assistance.

RECENT STAFF APPOINTMENTS

Miss Florette Osborne, formerly Regional Supervisor in the Commission's Windsor office, and then Conciliation Supervisor, has been named Community and Educational Specialist.

Colm Caffrey, formerly Investigating Officer in the Women's Bureau section of the Commission, is the new Supervisor, Toronto Regional Office.

Mrs. Barbara Justason, a Human Rights Officer, came to the Commission from the Department of Sociology in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, where she was the administrative assistant. Her previous positions were in the administrative field. She holds the B.A. degree in sociology from York University. She has combined this work with that of ski instructor for the last ten years.

Naison Mawande, originally from Rhodesia, was educated at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, the University of Western Ontario and the University of Toronto. He specialized in studies pertaining to government. He worked at the Commission's storefront office, Services for Working People, before becoming a Human Rights Officer.

Jean-Paul Fortier is the Human Rights Officer stationed in Sudbury and covering north-eastern Ontario. He was previously probation officer in Kirkland Lake, attached to the Ministry of Correctional Services. He also worked as an attendance officer with the Kirkland Lake Board of Education and acted as a social counsellor for Indian students from Sudbury and the James Bay area. He is a graduate of the University of Montreal.

Bruno Cavion is a Human Rights Officer in the Commission's Thunder Bay office. He taught in Algeria under the auspices of Canadian University Services Overseas, for a year. He holds the B.A. from the University of Toronto in French and Italian and the M.A. in French. He was born in Italy and has lived in Thunder Bay since moving to Canada.

A SAMPLE CASE FROM THE COMMISSION'S FILES

There is constant public interest in the nature of complaints handled by the Commission, their investigation and their outcome. A recent case illustrates that the motivations behind seeming discrimination rarely stem from outright bigotry and that respondents can still be insufficiently acquainted with the Human Rights Code and so embroil themselves unnecessarily when a straightforward dealing with the complainant and the Commission would have greatly simplified the matter. The case also shows how tangled a skein, a human rights officer often has to unravel when human affairs in all their possible diversity spill over the legal framework which covers them.

The case to be described also demonstrates a heartening sense of justice—and the use of the Code to achieve it—on the part of the majority group.

The complainant was a newly arrived Ugandan Asian woman with a six-year-old son, whose husband was to join them shortly in Toronto after coming from England where he was temporarily located. On her arrival in Toronto the complainant had been offered temporary living accommodation by a Canadian couple who had volunteered living space in their home through their local church. We will call the Canadian couple Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

After obtaining a housing grant from the Department of Manpower and Immigration, the complainant proceeded to look for an apartment, with the assistance of Mrs. Smith. They saw an advertisement for an apartment nearby and Mrs. Smith called the number, asked the landlord if he allowed children and was told that he did.

The complainant then went to see the apartment, accompanied by her son. She explained her situation. The owner of the four-plex building treated her "strangely" and asked her to call back later because others had made appointments to see the apartment. Yet the complainant, upon arriving, had seen the landlord offer the apartment to a Canadian who did not want to take it. There was differential treatment here, since he had not been asked to wait for the other appointments before being offered the apartment.

Made suspicious after learning all this, Mrs. Smith called on behalf of the complainant and was told by the landlord that the apartment was rented. In the course of the conversation he commented "Oh, that coloured woman" and added that he did not want to rent to couples with children. A quarter-hour later Mr. Smith called, did not identify himself, and was told that the apartment was available and that his having a child was no problem. Mr. Smith made an appointment to see the apartment the next evening.

The next morning the complainant, accompanied by Mrs. Smith, came to the Commission office to lodge a complaint. That same evening a human rights officer went to the building, learned that the apartment was rented and spoke to the out-going occupants who had lived there for four years; they had a three-year-old child and were white. But. . . the officer saw a black tenant in another suite.

When the officer met with the landlord, the latter seemed to be groping for explanations which would satisfy the officer, and indeed, continued to do so throughout the investigation. The landlord said no discrimination was involved, but that he preferred to rent to couples without children. The previous occupants had had a child after they were already living there. He said the apartment was rented late in the evening of the day the complainant had visited the apartment. This was verified as correct by Mr. Smith, who had kept his appointment and was told the same thing.

The officer was contacted by the landlord's adult daughter who also owned a four-plex and who said she had had trouble with a female tenant who was from Ceylon and whose husband had never arrived.

As discussions proceeded between the landlord and the officer, the landlord expressed concern for the plight of the Ugandan Asians and noted that he was an immigrant from Europe himself. The officer, through the landlord's lawyer, suggested a settlement, which the lawyer supported. The landlord accepted it. Meanwhile the complainant had quickly found another apartment in the same area and was not interested in obtaining that apartment. Her desire was to bring to the Commission's attention a case where discrimination was apparently involved and to see that action was taken to assure that it would not be repeated.

As part of the settlement, the landlord wrote to the complainant expressing his regret for any misunderstanding or embarrassment, assuring her that he did not intend any discriminatory treatment and urging her to contact him in the future if she were seeking an apartment. He also wrote a letter of assurance to the Commission of his intention to abide by the housing provisions of the Code.

The landlord spontaneously made a contribution to the Ugandan Asian Committee of Toronto to show his concern for displaced minorities!